

Standards for Reading, Writing, and Communication

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The draft standards are based on evidence of what is required for college and career readiness, as well as benchmarking with other countries. To see a sample of the evidence supporting the core standards in reading, please go to the link below. Similar pages for writing and for speaking and listening are under development.

<http://www.corestandards.net/readingmain.html>

Standards For Reading Informational and Literary Texts

Core Standards

To be college and career ready, students must:

1. Determine what the text says explicitly and use evidence within the text to infer what is implied by or follows logically from the text.
2. Support or question statements about the text by citing the text explicitly and accurately.
3. Assess the contributions that significant details as well as larger portions of the text make to the whole.
4. Summarize the ideas, events, or information in the text and determine the main ideas and themes.
5. ~~Trace how events and ideas unfold~~ in the text and explain how they relate to one another.
6. ~~Analyze the traits, motivations, and thoughts of individuals~~ in fiction and nonfiction based on how they are described, what they say and do, and how they interact.
7. Draw on context to determine what is meant by words and phrases, including figurative language.
8. Analyze how word choice shapes the meaning and tone of the text.
9. Analyze how the organizational structure advances the argument, explanation, or narrative.
10. Interpret data, graphics, and words in the text, and combine these elements of information to achieve comprehension.
11. Follow the reasoning that supports an argument or explanation and assess whether the evidence provided is relevant and sufficient.
12. Ascertain the origin and credibility of print and online sources when conducting research.
13. Analyze how two or more texts with different styles, perspectives, or arguments address similar topics or themes.
14. Apply knowledge and concepts drawn from texts to other texts, contexts, and circumstances.

Notes: The core standards are meant to apply to the different text types that students need to read for college and work. For example:

- “~~Trace how events and ideas unfold~~,” applies to plot in literature and to a review of scientific procedures and explanations.
- “~~Analyze the traits, motivations, and thoughts of individuals~~” applies to studying characters in fiction and figures in historical texts.

Standards For Reading Informational and Literary Texts

Required Range and Contexts

To be college and career ready, students must read texts of sufficient complexity, quality, and range:

Complexity: A crucial factor in students' readiness for college and careers is their ability to read and comprehend complex text independently. Students must be able to handle high levels of text complexity with regard to the sophistication of the language and content as well as the subtlety of the themes and issues explored. In college and careers, students will need to extract knowledge and information from reference materials, technical manuals, literature, and other texts (print and online) that are characterized by demanding and context-dependent vocabulary, subtle relationships among ideas and characters, a nuanced rhetorical style and tone, and often elaborate structures or formats. These challenging texts require the reader's close attention and often demand rereading in order to be fully understood.

Quality: The literary and informational texts chosen for study should be rich in content. Since certain works are products of exceptional craft and thought, all students should have access to these especially strong models of thinking and writing. This includes texts that have broad resonance and are referred to and quoted often, such as influential political documents, foundational literary works, and seminal historical and scientific texts. At the same time, reading substantive contemporary fiction engages students in the world and culture around them, just as reading thoughtful contemporary works in science and other disciplines enables students to reflect on pertinent issues in these disciplines. Attentive and wide reading of high quality texts builds the background knowledge and vocabulary essential to college and career level reading comprehension.

Range: Students also must demonstrate their capacity to read a variety of literary and informational texts and read deeply within fields of study in order to gain the knowledge base they need for college and career readiness.

Literature: When reading literature, students must demonstrate their capacity to pay special attention to the choices authors make about words and structures. Many literary effects depend on the order in which events unfold and the specific details used to describe characters and actions. Since these same strategies—order and use of detail—are equally critical in understanding the most demanding informational texts, reading literature helps students comprehend what they read in science, history and other subjects.

Informational Text: Because the overwhelming majority of college and workplace reading is non-fiction, students need to hone their ability to acquire information from nonliterary texts in mathematics and the social and natural sciences. When reading informational text, students must become attuned to different formats in which ideas are presented to access the knowledge contained in these texts. In order to be college and career ready, students will need to encounter complex non-fiction in their English courses as well as when reading in history, the sciences and other disciplines.

Standards for Writing

Core Standards

To be college and career ready, students must:

1. Select and refine a topic or thesis that addresses the specific task and audience.
2. Sustain focus on a specific topic or argument through careful presentation of essential content.
3. Create a logical progression of ideas and use transitions effectively to convey the relationships among them.
4. Support and illustrate arguments and explanations with relevant details and examples.
5. Develop and maintain a style and tone appropriate to the purpose and audience.
6. Choose words and phrases to express ideas precisely and concisely.
7. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard written English, including grammar, usage, and mechanics.
8. Represent and cite accurately the data, conclusions, and opinions of others.
9. Assess the quality of one's own writing and, when necessary, strengthen it through revision.

When **writing arguments**, students must also:

10. Establish a substantive claim, distinguishing it from alternate or opposing claims.
11. Link claims and evidence and ensure that the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims.
12. Acknowledge competing arguments or information, defending or qualifying the initial claim as appropriate.

When **writing to inform or explain**, students must also:

13. Synthesize information from multiple relevant sources, including graphics and quantitative information when appropriate, to provide an accurate picture of that information.
14. Convey complex information clearly and coherently to the audience through careful selection, organization, and presentation of the content.
15. Demonstrate understanding of the content by getting the key facts right, covering the essential points, and anticipating reader misconceptions.

Note: "The conventions of standard written English" encompass a range of commonly accepted language practices designed to make writing clear and widely understood. Correctness in writing is not an end in itself but rather a means to more effective communication. When formal writing contains errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics, its meaning is obscured, its message is too easily dismissed, and its author is often judged negatively. Proper sentence structure, correct verb formation, careful use of verb tense, clear subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement, conventional usage, and appropriate punctuation that clarifies meaning are of particular importance to formal writing.

Standards for Writing

Required Range and Contexts

To be college and career ready, students must adapt their writing to the:

Purpose: Students must be able to accomplish two main purposes with their writing:

Make an Argument: The ability to frame and defend an argument is particularly important to students’ readiness for college and careers. The goal of making an argument is to convince an audience of the rightness of the claims being made using logical reasoning and relevant evidence. In some cases, a student will make an argument to gain access to college or to a job, laying out their qualifications or experience. In college, a student might defend an interpretation of a work of literature or of history and, in the workplace, an employee might write to recommend a course of action. Students must frame the debate over a claim, presenting the evidence for the argument and acknowledging and addressing its limitations. This approach allows readers to test the veracity of the claims being made and the reasoning offered in their defense.

Inform or Explain: Writing to inform or explain requires students to integrate complex information from multiple sources in a lucid fashion, such as facts about a new technological application or a set of workplace procedures. To achieve coherence, students must illustrate the connections between ideas and events, such as cause and effect. Students also must organize their description or explanation in a manner appropriate to the context, responding to the specific needs of the reader by both covering the relevant ground and anticipating confusions that might arise. Writing is an opportunity for students to show what they know and share what they have seen, so it is essential that they check their facts and provide reliable information.

Audience: Students should write for a range of audiences and adapt their style and tone so that it is appropriate to the task and audience. Students must be able to take into consideration an audience’s characteristics, such as its background knowledge, its interests, and its potential objections to an argument. Strong, effective writing can overcome or at least influence an audience’s biases and address its limitations.

On-demand writing requirements of college and careers: Writers sometimes have the opportunity to take a piece of writing through multiple drafts, receiving feedback along the way, successively refining and polishing the text. Frequently, however, writers must produce high-quality text the first time and under a tight deadline, whether in response to a supervisor’s request for information or to a prompt on an exam. To meet the special requirements of on-demand writing, writers must exhibit flexibility, concentration, and fluency.

Note on narrative writing

Narrative writing is an important component of making an argument and writing to inform or explain. Telling an interesting story effectively, faithfully describing the steps in a scientific process, or providing an accurate account of a historical incident requires skillfully using narrative techniques. Narrative writing requires that students present vivid, relevant details to situate events in a time and place and also craft a structure that lends a larger shape and significance to those details. As an easily grasped and widely used way to share information and ideas with others, narrative writing is a principal stepping-stone to writing forms directly relevant to college and career readiness.

Standards for Speaking and Listening

Core Standards

To be college and career ready, students must:

1. ~~Present information and findings clearly and persuasively,~~ selecting an appropriate format, organization, and ~~register~~ for the purpose and audience
2. ~~Respond constructively~~ to clarify points and to build on or challenge ideas.
3. Listen to complex information and understand what was said, identifying main ideas and supporting details.
4. Follow the progression of the speaker's message and ~~evaluate the speaker's credibility and use of evidence.~~

Notes:

- ~~Present information and findings clearly and persuasively:~~ This includes conveying information concisely, taking into account audience background or prior knowledge of the selected topic, and ensuring that nonverbal cues such as gestures and eye contact contribute effectively to the delivery of the message.
- ~~Register:~~ This is the variety of language used in a particular setting. For example, a student should choose formal Standard English to deliver a presentation of research to an unfamiliar audience.
- ~~Respond constructively:~~ This can be accomplished by both a speaker and a listener. Responding constructively includes asking relevant questions, offering elaborations and answering questions, and using verbal and non-verbal cues to indicate or determine understanding, confusion, agreement, or disagreement.
- ~~Evaluate the speaker's credibility and use of evidence:~~ This includes distinguishing facts from opinions, determining bias and expertise, and assessing the speaker's supporting evidence.

Standards for Speaking and Listening

Required Range and Contexts

To be college and career ready, students must exhibit the Speaking and Listening Skills in the following contexts:

Formal and Informal:

Students are expected to exhibit the Speaking and Listening Skills in both formal and informal settings, adapting their language use accordingly. In particular, students should be able to use formal Standard English when called for in academic and workplace settings.

Group and One-to-One:

Students are expected to utilize the speaking and listening skills in both groups and one-to-one. The application of these skills may be different in varied settings. When communicating in a group and building on the ideas of others with group goals in mind, a student will have to respond constructively by taking turns, using non-verbal cues such as raising a hand. When communicating one-to-one, a student will be able to respond constructively in a more immediate manner such as by asking a question directly of the speaker.

Applications of the Core

Research

Note: This section draws on the Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening standards to demonstrate important applications of the core to college and career readiness.

The ability to conduct research independently, accurately, and effectively plays a fundamental role in college and the workplace. Research skills are critical tools for acquiring, extending, and sharing knowledge in academic and workplace settings, and students must be able to determine when and how to conduct and document research.

Research as described here is not limited to the formal, extended research paper; rather, these skills encompass a flexible yet systematic approach to resolving questions and investigating issues through the careful collection, analysis, synthesis, and presentation of information from print and digital sources. These research skills equip students with the tools to engage in sustained inquiry as well as tackle short, focused research projects that typify many research assignments in college and the workplace. Research in the digital age offers new possibilities but also new or heightened challenges. For one, the explosion of information available electronically puts a premium on students being able to determine the origin and credibility of their sources.

To be college and career ready, students must engage in research and present their findings in writing and orally, in print and online. While the skills represented in many of the standards from Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening could be called on when performing research, the following encapsulate the core standards for this application:

Reading:

- Summarize the ideas, events, or information in the text and determine the main ideas and themes. (4)
- Interpret data, graphics, and words in the text, and combine these elements of information to achieve comprehension. (10)
- Follow the reasoning that supports an argument or explanation and assess whether the evidence provided is relevant and sufficient. (11)
- Ascertain the origin and credibility of print and online sources when conducting research. (12)
- Apply knowledge and concepts drawn from texts to other texts, contexts, and circumstances. (13)

Writing:

- Select and refine a topic or thesis that addresses the specific task and audience. (1)
- Represent and cite accurately the data, conclusions, and opinions of others. (6)
- Establish a substantive claim, distinguishing it from alternate or opposing claims. (10)
- Link claims and evidence and ensure that the evidence is relevant and sufficient to support the claims. (11)
- Acknowledge competing information or arguments, defending or qualifying the initial claim as appropriate. (12)
- Synthesize information from multiple relevant sources, including graphics and quantitative information when appropriate, to develop an accurate picture of that information. (13)
- Convey complex information clearly and coherently to the audience through careful selection, organization, and presentation of the content. (14)
- Demonstrate understanding of the content by getting the key facts right, covering the essential points, and anticipating reader misconceptions. (15)

Speaking and Listening:

- Present information and findings clearly and persuasively, selecting an appropriate format, organization, and register for the purpose and audience. (1)

Applications of the Core

Media

Media skills play an increasingly important role in the gathering and sharing of ideas and information. At the core of media mastery are the same fundamental capacities as are required “offline” in traditional print forms: an ability to produce clear communications and an ability to access, understand, and evaluate complex materials and messages.

Media mastery also calls upon some skills unique to the online environment, ranging from being able to conduct digital-based research to exchanging and debating ideas in online discussions to interacting with new text forms. In the electronic world, reading and writing are closely intertwined, which affects both the processing of information as well as its production. Students should be able to create, collaborate on, and distribute media communications and must learn both to read closely and critically and to contribute effectively online through different media forms, such as blogs, wikis, and social networks.

While the skills represented in many of the standards from Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening could be called on in the interpretation and production of media, the following encapsulate the core standards for this application:

Reading:

- Summarize the ideas, events, or information in the text and determine the main ideas and themes. (4)
- Interpret data, graphics, and words in the text, and combine these elements of information to achieve comprehension. (10)
- Ascertain the origin and credibility of print and online sources when conducting research. (12)
- Analyze how two or more texts with different styles, perspectives, or arguments address similar topics or themes. (13)

Writing:

- Represent and cite accurately the data, conclusions, and opinions of others. (6)
- Synthesize information from multiple relevant sources, including graphics and quantitative information when appropriate, to develop an accurate picture of that information. (13)
- Convey complex information clearly and coherently to the audience through careful selection, organization, and presentation of the content. (14)
- Demonstrate understanding of the content by getting the key facts right, covering the essential points, and anticipating reader misconceptions. (15)
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Speaking and Listening

- Present information and findings clearly and persuasively, selecting an appropriate format, organization, and register for the purpose and audience. (1)
- Listen to complex information and understand what was said, identifying main ideas and supporting details. (3)
- Follow the progression of the speaker’s message and evaluate the speaker’s credibility and use of evidence. (4)

Reading Illustrative Texts at the Required Level of Complexity

Significance and Measurement of Text Complexity

Why Samples of Complex Texts?

Studies show that one concrete measure of readiness for college and careers is students' ability to read and comprehend complex text independently. Many students who do not encounter sufficiently challenging texts in high school struggle upon entering college. In the twenty-first century, students may change jobs often; they must therefore be able to read a range of complex texts to be ready for an ever-evolving workplace. While no sampling can do justice to the numerous ways in which different authors craft engaging and complex prose, the four selections below exemplify the kinds of passages students need to grapple with in high school to be ready to meet the challenges of college classrooms and workplaces.

- The first selection, from the Declaration of Independence, illustrates the kind of primary source materials students should be able to confront on their own in high school.
- The second passage, from Katherine Mansfield's short story, "Miss Brill," appears on several international reading lists and in many U.S. high school curricula.
- The third excerpt, by Sylvia Mader, comes from an entry-level college science text.
- The fourth text, taken from one of ACT's WorkKeys® assessments, represents one important type of real-world reading challenge: the business memo.

How Has Complexity Been Measured?

In addition to surveys of required reading in twelfth grade and the first year of college and consultations with experts in text complexity, two leading measurement systems were used to help make the selections below. While other measures of readability and text complexity have value, the two described below helped guide this initial work and confirmed that these four texts are suitable exemplars of the types of complex texts that students need to master to be ready for college and careers.

The first system—a methodology described by Jeanne Chall and her coauthors in *The Qualitative Assessment of Text Difficulty*—employs trained raters to measure the sophistication of vocabulary, density of ideas, and syntactic complexity in a text as well as the general and subject-specific knowledge and the level of reasoning required for understanding it. The second system, Coh-Metrix, incorporates into its computer-based analysis more than sixty specific indices of syntax, semantics, readability, and cohesion to assess text complexity. Central to its assessment are measures of text cohesiveness, that is, the degree to which the text uses explicit markers to link ideas. By analyzing the degree to which those links are missing in a text—and therefore the degree to which a reader must make inferences to connect ideas—this measure gauges a key factor in the comprehension demand of a text.

from The Declaration of Independence

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive to these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security. --Such has been the patient sufferance of these colonies; and such is now the necessity which constrains them to alter their former systems of government. The history of the present King of Great Britain is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations, all having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over these states. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

Sample Text #2

DRAFT
CONFIDENTIAL

from "Miss Brill," by Katherine Mansfield

There were a number of people out this afternoon, far more than last Sunday. And the band sounded louder and gayer. That was because the Season had begun. For although the band played all the year round on Sundays, out of season it was never the same. It was like some one playing with only the family to listen; it didn't care how it played if there weren't any strangers present. Wasn't the conductor wearing a new coat, too? She was sure it was new. He scraped with his foot and flapped his arms like a rooster about to crow, and the bandsmen sitting in the green rotunda blew out their cheeks and glared at the music. Now there came a little "flutey" bit—very pretty! —a little chain of bright drops. She was sure it would be repeated. It was; she lifted her head and smiled.

The band had been having a rest. Now they started again. And what they played was warm, sunny, yet there was just a faint chill—a something, what was it? —not sadness—no, not sadness—a something that made you want to sing. The tune lifted, lifted, the light shone; and it seemed to Miss Brill that in another moment all of them, all the whole company, would begin singing. The young ones, the laughing ones who were moving together, they would begin, and the men's voices, very resolute and brave, would join them. And then she too, she too, and the others on the benches—they would come in with a kind of accompaniment—something low, that scarcely rose or fell, something so beautiful—moving— And Miss Brill's eyes filled with tears and she looked smiling at all the other members of the company. Yes, we understand, we understand, she thought—though what they understood she didn't know.

from Inquiry into Life, by Sylvia S. Mader, 12th edition. (McGraw Hill)

A **covalent bond** results when two atoms share electrons in such a way that each atom has an octet of electrons in the outer shell. In a hydrogen atom, the outer shell is complete when it contains two electrons. If hydrogen is in the presence of a strong electron acceptor, it gives up its electron to become a hydrogen ion (H^+). But if this is not possible, hydrogen can share with another atom and thereby have a completed outer shell. For example, one hydrogen atom will share with another hydrogen atom. Their two orbitals overlap, and the electrons are shared between them. Because they share the electron pair, each atom has a completed outer shell.

* * * * *

The passage of salt ($NaCl$) across a plasma membrane is of primary importance to most cells. The chloride ion (Cl^-) usually crosses the plasma membrane because it is attracted by positively charged sodium ions (Na^+). First sodium ions are pumped across a membrane, and then chloride ions simply diffuse through channels that allow their passage.

As noted in Figure 4.2a, the genetic disorder cystic fibrosis results from a faulty chloride channel. Ordinarily, after chloride ions have passed through the membrane, sodium ions (Na^+) and water follow. In cystic fibrosis, Cl^- transport is reduced, and so is the flow of Na^+ and water.

* * * * *

Once a neurotransmitter has been released into a synaptic cleft and has initiated a response, it is removed from the cleft. In some synapses, the postsynaptic membrane contains enzymes that rapidly inactivate the neurotransmitter. For example, the enzyme **acetylcholinesterase (AChE)** breaks down acetylcholine. In other synapses, the presynaptic membrane rapidly reabsorbs the neurotransmitter, possibly for repackaging in synaptic vesicles or for molecular breakdown. The short existence of neurotransmitters at a synapse prevents continuous stimulation (or inhibition) of postsynaptic membranes.

Sample Text #4

Sample Business Memo

(ACT WorkKeys Reading for Information Test, Level 6 Sample Passage)

To permit our employees to communicate directly with one another as well as with vendors and customers, Molten Metals, Inc. provides a network of e-mail accounts. Access to e-mail is at the sole discretion of Molten Metals, Inc., and we will determine who is to be so empowered. Under President Duarte's leadership, all messages sent and received (even those intended as personal) are treated as business messages. Molten Metals, Inc. has the capability to and reserves the right to access, review, copy, and delete any messages sent, received, or stored on the company e-mail server. Molten Metals, Inc. will disclose these messages to any party (inside or outside the company) it deems appropriate. Employees should treat this server as a constantly reviewed, shared file stored in the system.

Due to the reduced human effort required to redistribute electronic information, a greater degree of caution must be exercised by employees transmitting MM, Inc. confidential information using company e-mail accounts. Confidential information belonging to MM, Inc. is important to our independence and should never be transmitted or forwarded to persons or companies not authorized to receive that information. Likewise, it should not be sent or forwarded to other employees inside the company who do not need to know that information.

MM, Inc. strongly discourages the storage of large numbers of e-mail messages for a number of reasons. First, because e-mail messages frequently contain company confidential information, it is good to limit the number of such messages to protect the company's information. Second, retention of messages fills up large amounts of storage space on the e-mail server and personal hard disks, and can slow down the performance of both the network and individual personal computers. Finally, in the event that the company needs to search the network server, backup tapes, or individual hard disks for genuinely important documents, the fewer documents it has to search through, the more economical the search will be. Therefore, employees are to delete as soon as possible any email messages they send or receive.